

2Go SOUL OF MAX UNDER SOCIALISM

rich to be so. Chnri'y they feel to be a ridiculously inadequate
restitution, or a sentimental dole, usually
by some impertinent attempt on the part of the
senf:rr.entc',j::t "to tyrannize over their private lives.
Why shouH th*-v ' . •'; 2;ratefu2 for the crumbs that fall from the rich
iron's ta'-iftr? They should be seated at the board, and are
htcinnir.; to know it. As for being discontented, a man
vrul, i n>t be discontented with who
surroundings and such a low jncjc of life would be a perfect brute.
Disobedience, in the eyes of any one who has read history, is man's
original virtue. It is through disobedience that progress has
been made, through disobedience and through rebellion.
Sometimes the poor are praised for being thrifty. But to
recommend thrift to the poor is both grotesque and insulting. It is
like advising a man who is starving to eat less. For a town or
country labourer to practise thrift would be absolutely immoral.
Man should not be ready to show that he can live like a badly
fed animal. He should decline to live like that, and should
either steal or go on the rates, which is considered by many to
be a form of stealing. As for begging, it is safer to beg than
to take, but it is finer to take than to beg. No: a poor man
who is ungrateful, unthrifty, discontented, and rebellious,
is probably a real personality, and has much in him. He is at
any rate a healthy protest. As for the virtuous poor, one
can pity them, of course, but one cannot possibly admire them.
They have made private terms with the enemy, and sold their
birthright for very bad pottage. They must also be extraordinarily
stupid. I can quite understand a man accepting laws that
protect private property, and admit of its accumulation,
as long as he himself is able under those conditions to realize
some form of beautiful and intellectual life. But it is almost
incredible to me how a man whose life is marred and made
hideous by such laws can possibly acquiesce in their continuance.
However, the explanation is not really difficult to find. It
is simply this. Misery and poverty are so absolutely
degrading, and exercise such a paralysing effect over the
nature of men, that no class is ever really conscious of its own
suffering. They have to be told of it by other people, and they
often entirely disbelieve them. What is said by great employers
of labour against agitators is unquestionably true.
Agitators are a set of interfering, meddling people, who come down
to some per-

fectly contented class of the community, and
sow the seeds
of discontent amongst them. That is the reason
why agitators